

Rewarding Teachers for Excellence

Performance Pay Provisions in the TEACH Act and Miller-McKeon Discussion Draft

As a nation, we don't show teachers the respect they deserve. It's time we treated teachers like partners in our education system and reward teachers for their professionalism, talent, and hard work. In most workplaces in America, employees are rewarded when they excel. It is common practice across industries and occupations to partly base workers' pay on performance. Teachers who work hard and demonstrate excellence in their work deserve to be rewarded.

The discussion draft would reward teachers for excellence with bonuses of up to \$50,000 each over four years.

The discussion draft allows school districts to apply for federal funds to be used to give exemplary teachers bonuses of up to \$12,500 per year (and exemplary principals bonuses of up to \$15,000 per year.) It would require teachers to be rated as "exemplary" based on a number of factors, including student learning gains, evaluations conducted by the principal, and evaluations conducted by master teachers. The discussion draft prohibits school districts from rating teachers exclusively on the basis of student test scores.

The discussion draft requires school districts and local teacher organizations to collaborate in the development the teacher evaluation systems.

Because evidence has shown that performance pay systems work only when they are developed in collaboration with teachers – *not* when they are imposed upon teachers – the discussion draft requires each school district that chooses to apply for these funds to work with the local teacher organization to design its performance pay system. Among the other criteria that the school district, in collaboration with the teachers' union, must take into consideration as part of the evaluation system is National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.

The discussion draft would require school districts to create better working environments for teachers in order to receive funding for performance pay bonuses.

In order to be eligible for these additional funds for teacher bonuses, school districts would be required to improve their schools' working conditions through a range of activities, such as:

- reducing class size;
- ensuring the availability of classroom materials, textbooks and other supplies;
- improving or modernizing facilities;
- improving school safety; and
- providing matching funds.

The discussion draft removes the provision in No Child Left Behind that allows "merit" pay that could be based solely on test scores without safeguards for teachers.

Current law allows states to spend a portion of their Title II funds, which total over \$3 billion per year, on merit pay, with no safeguards for teachers. Page 207 of NCLB states that states can now use their Title II funds for: "*Developing, or assisting local educational agencies in developing, merit-based performance systems and strategies that provide differential and bonus pay for teachers in high-need academic subjects such as reading, mathematics, science and teachers in high-poverty schools and districts.*" Page 212 of NCLB states that school districts can use a portion of their funds for "*programs that are designed to improve the quality of the teacher force, such as...merit pay programs.*"

Prepared by the Democratic Staff of the House Education and Labor Committee • September 2007

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Support for Performance Pay Proposals in Miller-McKeon Discussion Draft

“I want to thank you for responding to the successes that performance pay and career ladder programs have demonstrated in high need schools by including funding for these important initiatives in the NCLB bill...I hope that this committee will provide funding for programs to allow more schools and districts to reform their compensation systems for teachers. These reforms should support additional pay for taking on new roles and responsibilities such as that of a Mentor teacher, as well as rewarding teachers for their own skill development and the academic achievement gains of their students and their school.”

- Germaine Brown, Teacher, Stewart Street Elementary School, Gadsden Co., Florida

“I believe the establishment of performance pay at DC Prep is one factor that has helped to focus teachers on the specific student achievement goals we have for our students. Bonuses for increased student achievement do not by themselves improve teacher skills, but they do provide concrete goals for teachers and they reward and acknowledge outstanding effort. The other aspects of TAP – professional support, coaching, evaluation and career opportunity – are essential to complement performance pay as they provide a mechanism for teachers to improve their practice and to increase student achievement on a consistent basis.”

- MaryKate Hughes, Teacher, DC Preparatory Academy, Washington, DC

“You have added to Title II a very important...discretionary program for states to strengthen teacher effectiveness through use of extra pay for success with student achievement gains, introduction of career ladders, and support for performance assessments. In order to attract and retain highly effective teachers and principals, there is a great need for targeted investments like this to incentivize change in our public education system. We all need to acknowledge that job structure and financial rewards are important motivators for employees no matter what their profession.”

-John Podesta, President & CEO, Center for American Progress

“There are many proposals in the current Committee discussion draft that would spur innovation in this area, including support for “premium pay” in hard-to-staff, high-poverty schools, as well as career ladders for teachers to grow as professionals while staying in the classroom. These proposals were initially proposed in the TEACH Act, introduced by now-Chairman Miller in the last Congress, and were widely praised across the education community, including public endorsements from both of the national teachers’ unions, and they deserve to be enacted.”

-Kati Haycock, President, Education Trust

“We strongly support the bill’s proposed funding for performance pay programs and career ladder programs. While there are many other important proposals impacting teacher quality in the bill, we believe these two programs are critical... We also applaud the Committee’s requirements that this new funding be linked in part to increases in student achievement. Too often in the past, professional development has been delivered without any measure of whether teachers took it back to their classrooms or whether, if they did, it had any impact on student achievement.”

- Kristan Van Hook, Vice President, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

“Some of the committee’s recommendations, particularly relating to teacher pay, are bound to be controversial. But they are also important and long overdue. We cannot recruit the best and brightest into the classroom and expect them to excel and persist once they get there without taking every opportunity to recognize and reward excellence in education.”

-Kevin Carey, Research & Policy Mngr., Education Sector

“The bill would provide crucial incentives to increase likelihood that effective teachers will remain in or come to high-need schools...The focus on systems changes to attract and hire teachers and school leaders can make a big impact.”

- Jon Schnur, Co-Founder and CEO, New Leaders for New Schools